

## On ‘Japanese Style’ Teacher Education Reform: Considering Issues of Quality Development under an ‘Open System’\*

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*A complication of teacher education policy in Japan is rooted in a gap between an image of teachers, which is held by society as a whole, and includes various character traits and the reality of Japanese university education. On the other hand, the expansion of an “open system” and lack of nationwide standard are making individual universities that provide teacher education programs in Japan to “narrow down.” The enforcement of the current approval system is deficient as a quality assurance measure, and therefore has many harmful effects. Accordingly, it is desirable to recognize the realities of teacher education and respect the independence of individual universities when considering teacher education reform in the future.*

**Keywords:** teacher education policy; open system; approval system; ‘East Asian’ image of teachers; independency

### Introduction

Based on the complication of recent Japanese teacher education measures and the confusion at where teacher education actually takes place, the main motif of the present paper is to analyze structurally why such a complicated and confused situation is taking place, and to point out basic directions and problems that are necessary for the consideration of Japanese teacher education reform in the future.

Specifically, in the first section, I attempt to elucidate a relationship between “university” and “teacher education” in Japan, including issues surrounding teacher images. This relationship is at the back of teacher education policies that seem to be swaying as political power shifts

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between political parties. In section two, I will then clarify a Japanese teacher education system which is based on an “open system,” and the features of teacher education programs that are being conducted under such a system. This is done by comparing it to the present condition of practice teaching in East Asian areas<sup>1</sup> and nationwide management measures that are behind it. Furthermore, in section three, by taking application reinforcement of an approval system as an example, which is adopted as a nationwide management policy in Japanese teacher education, I will consider quality enhancement measures that are led by policies with power, including its limits and harmful effects. Finally, by summarizing these points, I will point out issues for the future in section four.

## 1. Japanese Style Teacher Education Policy

### 1.1 Background

Experiencing the turns of political power twice in 2009 and 2012, policies related to Japanese teacher education seem to be considerably complicated. At the Central Council for Education (CCE) under Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), a direction was announced attempting to improve quality by setting the basic qualification of teacher education “at a Master’s degree, and clearly placing teachers as advanced specialized professionals.”<sup>2</sup> The “Research Cooperator Meeting toward the Implementation of an Improvement Measure for the Development of Teachers’ Quality,” which was set up after the release of the report in August 2012, has been examining specific measures related to the practical improvement of teacher education at the Master’s level. This switched greatly under the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) after the general election in December 2012, and the measure to make the Master’s degree as the basic qualification for the acquisition of a teaching certificate retreated. What is being considered instead is placing a license that can be acquired as a preliminary “Associate License,” leaving the present teacher education system at universities basically untouched. After that, the introduction of an intern system<sup>3</sup> that confers a real certificate after experiencing “several years of a trial period” is being suggested.

Facing such swaying of policies, higher education institutions, that offer teacher education under ‘open system’<sup>4</sup> principles in Japan, face a difficult situation to develop and maintain future programs related to levels, content, and instruction of teacher education systems.

However, it is also true that the understanding between the DPJ and the LDP toward teacher education of recent Japan overlaps considerably. To state it plainly, considering diversification and complication of educational problems nowadays, it is an understanding that the present teacher education with “Bachelor” level as a de facto standard is insufficient, which many universities conduct under the “open system” principles. It can be said that this recognition is supported from two points. One is a critical awareness from a quantitative aspect that there is a constant situation where there are far more people with a teacher license than there is a demand, especially at senior and junior high school level. The other is from a qualitative aspect that teacher education at university level is slanted toward so called “lectures” and is not being useful in educating teachers with abundant “practice.” In fact, at a meeting of the Sub-committee for the Development of Teacher Quality for teacher quality enhancement held in 2010 in the 5<sup>th</sup> term of the CCE under the DPJ, when planning the basic qualification of teacher education at “Master’s level,” quality improvement aiming to enrich practical teacher

education programs was examined referring to professional school of education established in 2008. At the same time, “the scale of training education<sup>5</sup>,” or in other words narrowing down in size, was also examined. On the other hand, as aforementioned, at the Headquarters for the Revitalization of Education<sup>6</sup> launched by the LDP in October 2012, fulfillment measures for “Graduate Schools for Teachers”, or professional school of education, as well as a system to be hired full-time after several years of “intern” are being examined. To ameliorate the insufficient condition of teacher education at present university and graduate school level, this is done by not implementing training education reform directly, but by a sort of lowering its position by conferring an “associate teaching license.” It is understood as a way to enhance the situation by giving practical training at actual educational settings after employment where there has been certain narrowing down in number.

In this way, while many universities provide teacher education at Bachelor’s level under the ‘open system’ principles, an understanding is shared that effective quality improvement measures are not functioning. The recent policy argument on teacher education reform in Japan is developing from that point. The state of this recognition requires further examination as it will be mentioned in the following. However, at least the understanding toward the present teacher education system held by Japanese political parties, and public opinion that supports it, is fundamentally common regardless of changes in political power.

## 1.2 Two solutions, and its complication

However, policies for enhancement measures or solutions planned ahead of this recognition between the DPJ and LDP differ considerably. This is due to a difference in how one views where the main place of teacher education is. Moreover, there is an unresolved issue around relationships between Japanese university education and teacher images and teacher aptitude.

As it appears in the report of the CCE of August 28, 2012, the basics of solutions raised by the DPJ are the advancement of a teacher education system by having existing “universities” as the main field. Teachers who should be trained here are imagined such as someone who “has the power to continue learning independently through the overall teaching profession life” and “holds advanced knowledge and skills as specialized professionals.”<sup>7</sup> As a field extending its specialty based on such scholarship, graduate school, mainly at Master’s level, with practical research at the center being assumed.

On the contrary, an LDP type of solution that has been examined such as at the Headquarters for the Revitalization of Education puts more emphases on the formation of teacher’s ability at fields outside of universities. In a “teacher intern system,” building practical skills in classroom situations and confirming one’s aptitude through that are being planned. Besides this, a former teacher education led by schools and boards of education that have undertaken education until now play a leading role. This appears, for instance, in a suggestion to “develop “teacher *juku*,”<sup>8</sup> nationwide, and improve a system that fulfills certain responsibility and roles by boards of education at the stage of teacher training even before employment.”<sup>9</sup> There is also a suggestion to “make the number of teachers with various working experiences to ten percent.”<sup>10</sup> This shares some underlying notion with the inclusion of competent people without training education of the existing system into the field of education, such as a measure supported by the Education Rebuilding Council in 2007.

Both can be stereotypically illustrated shown in Table 1. The solutions supported by the DPJ are an extension of the so-called beginning of modern nation, or a school system as part of

Table 1 Types of Japanese teacher education reform theories

Modern	Model	Un-modern
Close to the DPJ	political party affinity	Close to the LDP
Reinforcement of the already existing teacher training system	Basic ideas	Relativiation of the already existing teacher training system, expectation for an alternative
Practice based on specialized scholarship	Values emphasized	Practice based on high appreciation of mission
From few universities after narrowing down	Recruitment	From outside of universities, in addition to various universities
Upgraded universities and graduate schools	Places for teacher training	Actual school settings and boards of education as the main
“Master’s degree” as standard (The CCE report of August 2012)	Policy examples	Internship, expansion of an employment quota for working people (Education Rebuilding Council, May 2015)

building infrastructure by the government. In that sense, it is remarkably modern. On the other hand, the LDP type of solutions can be viewed as having the center of its ideas away from such a modern state. An idea like “internship” that leave the main field of training education to the existing settings like schools and boards of education is close to that of a pre-modern apprentice system. Meanwhile, an idea to individually recruit someone taking charge of education from outside the teacher education system is reminiscent of the employment of private tutors of medieval aristocrats.

While a modern teacher education system seems to come to a deadlock, the DPJ type of solutions that plan the reinforcement of its system lacks flexibility. On the other hand, the LDP type of ideas that seek solutions in an anti-modern way also lacks mid and long-term future ideas. Needless to say, the effects of training like that of an apprentice system is effective only in settings where its purpose is to faithfully hand down and reproduce skills of people in the past like traditional crafts and entertainment. This is different from the modern teaching profession. Furthermore, individual recruitment of competent people having no systematic teacher education only shows its effectiveness in limited settings. This clashes with versatility that leads to the improvement of the education foundation of society as a whole.

### 1.3 “East Asian” teacher images and Japanese university education

Behind these two solutions, there are teacher images that are peculiar to cultures of East Asian Buddhism and Confucianism that are different from the so-called a Western style of profession. That would be “Confucian images of teachers,”<sup>11</sup> an expression borrowed from a Chinese researcher Yong-Ming Chen. Those who are in teaching profession in various East Asian areas will be demanded not simply about ability to teach knowledge and skills, but also various character traits as a “teacher.”

In Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and other urban areas along the coast of China where market economy has particularly developed, such "East Asian style" of teacher images<sup>12</sup> have come to hold stronger various character traits as a central part of its identity, in relationship with the educational industry such as *juku* (cram schools) and preparatory schools. With considerable parts of preparatory education for paper test entrance examinations becoming service products, relative roles of teachers in public education to teach knowledge and skills decreases. An aspect of "a model for a way of living"<sup>13</sup> is demanded more strongly.

However, it is not easy to include various character traits into teacher education at university. Take a recent measure in Japan as an example. When professional school of education was established with American professional schools as a model, there was a situation where one of five common areas of the program course included "an area on the condition of school teachers and educations"<sup>14</sup> This is a plain manifestation of the difficulty. It cannot help but to carry the character traits as such a "fundamental status" at the center of curriculum for advanced professional education.

Situations such as these tend to appear more particularly in relations with Japanese universities and teacher education even within various East Asian countries. To indicate difficulties that are peculiar to Japan by contrasting it to a Chinese case, the following two points are raised.

First of all, Chinese universities, as higher education in an apprentice relationship, are established as a place<sup>15</sup> to practice education while living together (practicing both higher education and personality ruling), as it is observed in ancient "*Shuyuan*." On the other hand, it can be pointed out that Japanese universities were built as a field for professional academic research and education using Europe, in the early stage of the modern time, and America, after the war, as a model. Thus, when a discussion over the promotion of advanced normal school into university occurred both in Japan and China in the 1920s, Beijing Normal University was established in 1923 based on Beijing Higher Normal University and Beijing Women's Higher Education. In contrast, Tokyo Higher Normal School and Hiroshima Higher Normal School did not become "normal universities," and University of Literature and Science was established in 1929 as a separate higher educational institution. We are at where we are through such contrasting development. In Japan, normal education that centered personality ruling and university that aimed at academic research were considered as something incompatible. What this means is that normal universities in China, particularly six schools<sup>16</sup> that are directly under the Ministry of Education obtained comparatively high status within domestic higher education, in the development of higher education in both countries later on. In Japan, on the other hand, Japanese teacher education universities are remaining in a relatively low status within domestic higher education, partly due to a circumstance that they were formed based on teacher education institutions that were prefectural normal schools.

Secondly, related to particularly teacher education of elementary schools, it can be pointed out that a system is adopted where homeroom teachers are basically subject-based in China whereas homeroom teachers teach all-rounded subjects in Japan. Therefore, it has been difficult in Japanese universities to construct a system of elementary school teacher education by placing academic fields related to the teaching content of each subject at the center. An "area-oriented theory" of teacher education by Kaoru Yokosuka that will be mentioned later in this paper is understood as something that raised a question regarding a relationship between Japanese teacher education and university while confronting such difficulties.

From the above, regarding a request toward Japanese teachers' aptitudes, it is possible

to say that Japanese universities as teacher education institutions carry a fate of being unable to reply sufficiently. Accordingly, a radical quality enhancement measure related to Japanese teacher education can be regarded as something being searched including the reconsideration of “teacher education at universities” and an “open system for teaching certificates” that have long been considered as two major principles. Of the two solutions shown in Table 1, the DPJ type puts an emphasis on the quality changeover of “universities” that have been offering teacher education until present, and reducing in scale of the “open system” following it. The LDP type, in contrast, could be understood as something that resigned themselves to the limit of “university” as a teacher education institution and has left the main role to enhance teachers’ quality outside of “teacher education at university.”

However, these are not enough to explain reasons why “university” exclusively becomes the target in relation to quality enhancement measures of recent Japanese teacher education. In the next section, I would like to examine more deeply about teacher education programs in universities while principles of the “open system” have been developing in a Japanese style.

## **2. Characteristics of Japanese Style Teacher Training of “Open System” Principles: a Comparison Mainly among Various Areas in East Asia**

### **2.1 Japanese characteristics of an “open system”**

Besides Japan, a teacher education system with an “open system” type is adopted widely in East Asian countries, with Korea’s elementary school teacher education<sup>17</sup> being almost the only exception. However, Japanese “open system” stands out in its large scale.

As an example, Table 2 shows a comparison in scale of “open systems” of Japan and China<sup>18</sup>.

In China, a policy of the State Council, PRC, which came out in 2001 became a turning point. Educational institutions with “non-normal education courses” (not directly connecting to the acquisition of teaching certificates, which is similar to new courses at teacher education universities in Japan) were established other than conventional “normal education courses” (directly connected to the acquisition of teaching certificates, which is similar to Japanese teacher training courses) at normal schools (normal universities). Optional teacher certification courses (which is similar to teacher training courses) in other general universities were also established. By doing so, the system is transferring into a more “open system” style that makes the provision of teacher education possible. However, due to a short history of an “open system,” institutions that offer teacher education other than normal schools are fewer than that in Japan, and it is only thirty percent of the total higher education institutions (a university regular course is a four-year system, and a special course is a two to three-year system). Compared to this, about 80 percent of the total higher education institutions (universities and junior colleges) in Japan provide teacher training education after acquiring course approval. A gap between the number of students acquiring teaching certificates and those being hired as a new teacher is growing bigger as well. Looking from a different angle, about 300 students of newly graduates on average obtain a teaching position in elementary and secondary schools from one teacher education institution in China, whereas it is only about ten students on average in the case of Japan.

From the above, since it has a history from old times and spreads broadly, the “open system” of Japanese teacher training creates not only a situation of supply surplus but also a

Table 2 An "open system" of higher education in China and Japan (2010)

		China	Japan
The number of certificate issued	Elementary schools	158,799	27,470
	Secondary schools	300,237	53,274
The number of newly graduates and newly hired (*)	Elementary schools	103,667	6,558
	Secondary schools	88,894	3,305
The total number of higher education institution (a)		2,358	1,100
		Universities (regular and special)	Universities and Junior colleges
The number of institution that provide teacher education (b)		699	855
b/a		30%	78%
The number of institution by training purposes (c)		212	48
		Normal schools	Teacher training departments
c/b		30%	6%

(\*) The number from 2009.

Source: China's National Statistics Yearbook (2010), data from Basic data of Teacher Education and Teachers Groups (2010) and data provided by Teaching Personnel Division, MEXT Japan

situation where teacher education institutions proliferate broadly and shallowly.

## 2.2 Characteristics of "practical" programs in Japanese teacher training: an international comparison of teaching practice

Japanese features of the "open system" as aforementioned is that it affects considerably on the state of "practical" programs, such as practice teaching that work together with actual school settings, in Japanese teacher education.

"East Asian" images of teachers pointed out in the previous section appears commonly in the reality of teaching practice programs in various areas of East Asia (in mainland China, Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan)<sup>19</sup>. At an instruction scene of teaching practice in any of these areas, an emphasis is put on matters not only on teaching actions itself such as class plans, practice, self-reflection, and evaluation of student teachers, but also on matters such as demeanor and a sense of teaching profession and mission. It has also become evident from participant observations, and interviews of student teachers and advisers, that there is a tendency that these comprise a considerable portion of evaluation metrics. Particularly in Taiwan, there are cases that the period of teaching practice extends to as long as half a year, and "practicum for student guidance" (student guidance) is as an essential component as "practicum of classroom lessons" and "practicum of school administration." Guiding students in everyday life is assigned to student teachers. Even in Hong Kong (the training period is approximately eight weeks), Korea (the training period is about eight to eleven weeks), and mainland China (the training period is stated as eighteen weeks in "teacher education course standards" indicated by the Ministry of Education, but about 8 to 11 weeks in reality), there are parts prepared during the teaching practice period where student teachers engage in classroom management and student guidance other than teaching lessons.

These characteristics of education training are also basically common to that of Japan. In Japan cases, however, the short period is prominent. Thus, it cannot be denied that the quantity of practice is insufficient for practice lessons, classroom management and student guidance. Since the scale of the “open system” in Japan is larger, it is interpreted that the degree of difficulty is bigger than other areas to assign uniformly a long-term practice to a large number of trainees.

The size of the “open system” scale like this creates further difficulty in securing practice schools for each university, especially universities located in cities where universities are concentrated, that offer teacher education in Japan. In other East Asian areas, obtaining teacher training schools is left to the responsibility of each university that offers teacher education<sup>20</sup>. Although there is a difference in degree, difficulty in securing training schools is common in every area especially in cities where universities are concentrated. However, it can be interpreted that the degree of power relationship of “making request” to training schools, as well as to the board of education that has control over the schools is becoming stronger especially in Japanese cities.

In such power relationship, it is demanded on Japanese student teachers not only the ability to simply conduct classes smoothly but also demeanor and an appreciation of the teaching job and mission. This is creating a situation where guidance extends to “dress codes” such as clothes, hair style, and accessories. Related to this point, at schools where participant observations of students conducted in training in all East Asian areas other than Japan, the “dress codes” of student teachers were basically the same from that on campus. Elements like student teachers’ demeanor, an appreciation of the teaching profession and mission are considered common in “East Asian type” of teacher images that are taken seriously in broad areas, but universities advising students on “dress codes” is a peculiar feature in Japan.

These circumstances peculiar to Japan can be understood as a situation arising from the following context. Universities that leave student teachers to practice teaching schools by “making a request” receive pressures from the practice teaching schools “to send student teachers who have a strong intention to take the teaching job seriously,” or in other words it is pressures “to not send student teachers who are irresponsible.” To such pressures, universities have chosen to advise students manners “that would not be ill-mannered to practice teaching schools” for the time being, rather than arguing against this directly like “it is a big merit of the “open system” to guarantee an opportunity to acquire a teaching certificate to those who do not intend to take a teaching job immediately.” There are two points that should be considered here as problematic. One is that there is a tendency of such external guidance like “dress codes” is taking place before practical training of substantial content such as teaching subjects, student guidance and classroom management. Another is that such substantial content tends to be lacking in Japanese practical training. In such a condition, continuing the development of “practical” programs in teacher education in Japan is considered not preferable for its quality enhancement.<sup>21</sup>

### **2.3 A nationwide quantity management policy and a “narrowing down” function**

On the other hand, in various areas of East Asia other than Japan, it is distinct that each government is conducting effective management in terms of quantity at the “entry” stage of teacher education programs, based on the “open system.” In mainland China, the total number of student capacity of normal education courses is regulated by the Education Department, and a system is adopted where the number is allotted through a competitive bid of each university.

There is also a similar system in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. In Japan, on contrary, the "Committee for the Future Status of National Universities and Faculties of Education" came out with a report to have the "10,000 people system as a base" in 2001. However, partly due to the abolition of a controlling policy<sup>22</sup> in 2005, the number increased slightly to 11,528 in 2012 academic year. Regarding teacher-training courses in other general universities that occupy the majority, there is no limit put on the total number.

Additionally, in Korea and Taiwan, as aforementioned, a competitive bid system limiting the total capacity is not adopted. However, regular governmental inspection for all teacher education institutions, as well as any recommendations based on such inspections function to manage candidate numbers. Korean Ministry of Education entrusted the teacher training institution approval system that has been conducted from 1998 to the Korean Educational Development Institution (KEDI). In addition to students' grades and employment rate in the items for inspection itself, a reduction of capacity (20% to 50% maximum) was imposed as a penalty in cases where an inspection result was lower than Level C<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, teacher education for secondary school (junior and senior high school) adopts a system of an "open system" type. However, because each university that offers teacher education in Korea is urged necessary to keep students' quality who enters the program to higher than a certain level at all times, it is unavoidable to conduct "narrowing down" only to excellent students at the "entry" stage.

Additionally, there are a considerable number of universities that stopped offering teacher education because of being unable to endure the evaluation conducted by KEDI. Also in Taiwan, evaluation is conducted regularly by the Ministry of Education for every sort of license to all teacher education institutions, and programs that received "Level Three" are basically being abolished<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore, after completing teacher education in Taiwan, "exit management" is conducted to ensure that only those who pass the Ministry of Education examination receive certificates. A similar introduction of unified qualification related to the acquisition of teaching certificates is being promoted gradually in mainland China from 2011 academic year.

Compared to such conditions of various areas in East Asian, it is a feature of Japan that there is no management in terms of controlling the number by the government. Thus, "narrowing down" at the entry level of teacher education programs of general universities and departments that occupy the majority especially under "open system" principles is comparatively weak. In addition, unified management at the "exit" such as license examination is not conducted. Hence, goals of teacher education of each university is set individually through opportunities such as "teaching practice seminars."

Moreover, a "narrowing down" function on students entering teacher education programs will be implemented by each university as those programs proceed. Through various phases like course registration necessary for the license acquisition, the strength of an appreciation to the teaching profession, or training practice attitudes including "dress codes" that was mentioned above, students are screened.

Compared to the areas in East Asia mentioned above, in addition to a condition where the "open system" expanded broadly in Japanese teacher education system, nationwide standard related to the total number of teacher education is insufficient. Thus, there is a situation, which is characteristic, where each university is assigned a role to implement "narrowing down" of students, while students are in the middle of their courses after entering teacher education programs. However, such narrowing down by each university is conducted from an inferior position in a power relationship with the boards of education that hold personnel rights of

teachers. Therefore, there is a tendency that it is conducted by the state of covering the outside like appearance, and the state of having a sense of teaching profession and mission at inside, rather than being examined from a qualitative perspective that whether a student holds proper nature to be involved in the future teaching profession. This does not lead to a teacher quality enhancement measure.

### **3. A Policy Guiding Type Enhancement Measure and Its Limitations: Concerning Management Reinforcement for Curriculum Approval**

#### **3.1 Management reinforcement for curriculum approval, and its merits and demerits**

In recent Japanese teacher education policies, management reinforcement for a curriculum approval system is being set forth as a mechanism for nationwide “quality assurance.” On this matter, a report by the CCE of July 2006 suggested to consider “a system that allows to take steps such as withdrawing the approval of the teaching training curriculum in the end, when no improvement was observed”<sup>25</sup> in the teaching profession curriculum of accredited universities. Moreover, there is an independent section prepared in a CCE report of August 2012 related to “quality assurance for the teaching profession curriculum.” In the section, more in-depth suggestions are made, and there is a consistent tendency for reinforcement in recent years. In-depth suggestions include such as conducting screening strictly for the approval of the teaching professions curriculum, planning a further improvement on the inspection of practice for curriculum approval, and clarifying the process of recommendation for correction and approval cancellation, like cancelling the approval of the teaching profession curriculum when improvement cannot be observed.

A typical example can be observed in the examination of “correspondence between licenses and aims of departments” of universities in which the teaching profession curriculum is provided. Regarding the training courses for kindergarten and elementary school teachers, according to the curriculum approval criteria up to now, it is stated that “approval can only be given to departments that have teacher training as their main purpose.”<sup>26</sup> The current application of the curriculum approval system is different to when it was first introduced, and it clearly has been made more rigorous. For instance, University of the Sacred Heart, Faculty of Liberal Arts (capacity of 450 freshman students in academic year 2013) and Kansai University, Faculty of Letters (770 freshman students) basically take a stance where students are accepted collectively at the time of the university entry, and they are placed in separate majors and departments when they go on to their second year. Primary education major (established in 2007) in Education Department of the former determines where students belong after students finish taking freshman’s basic courses that are common to the whole department, whereas primary education specialization in the same university provides a separate quota of thirty places at the point of the entrance examination. When considering “departments with teacher training as their main purpose,” it is interpreted that its application is a manifestation that independent educational organization with a quota at the time of entry is being demanded more.

Even in cases of receiving teacher training curriculum approval for junior and senior high schools, a policy<sup>27</sup> to conduct a rigorous inspection on correspondence between licenses and aims of departments was announced, that was put into practice since academic year 2009. The policy was based on the point made by the Sub-committee for Teacher Training of the CCE

which stated, “the aim of curriculum approval based on course credits is to make students become highly specialized in a subject that is demanded for teachers who will be in charge of the subject. This is done by having a certain number of students earn credits related to subjects which the institution hopes to get approval, while placing knowledge in specialized fields acquired through four years (two years for junior colleges) of education in their departments as a prerequisite. Thus, when applying for new curriculum approval due to reasons like reorganization of a department, it is necessary for the institution to appropriately place teacher training of a subject concerned within the purposes of a newly-organized department. In addition, at the time of curriculum formation, it is necessary for the institution to prepare a considerable number of “courses related to subjects” that are beyond the minimum set by a law for licenses. Needless to say, checking syllabuses, and checking the coherence of the instructors’ education and research achievements are being tightened than before.

There is a situation where universities cannot get away from thinking “What can be done to pass the screening for the present curriculum approval.” It is essential when considering the philosophy and purpose of a new education system, if they were to continue receiving the curriculum approval, even after reorganization of an education system that used to receive curriculum approval prior to the reorganization. What need to be questioned are matters such as whether this form of management reinforcement of curriculum approval is effective as a “quality assurance” measure related to Japanese teacher training education, or whether there are harmful influences.

### **3.2 Curriculum approval administration and “external index”**

As it has already been clarified, the present approval system has its model on the old system’s “designated institutes of non-examination system for secondary education teachers<sup>28</sup>.” Thus, there are considerable similarities in its application styles and items for screening<sup>29</sup>. In the screening process of the designated institutes of the non-examination system, however, individual “student achievement” of non-examination designated institutes has been the subject of a direct screening by the Committee of Teacher Qualification<sup>30</sup>. According to Toshio Funaki<sup>31</sup>, this was because its subject was not national but “public and private” “non-universities.” This is different from the present system, and there is no need to question the academic achievement of those who has been qualified in addition to credit approval of each university already receiving curriculum approval.

In addition to universities and junior colleges that are based on such old system’s designated institutes of non-examination system, the present approval system is for a whole new-university system including the old system’s public and private designated institutes of non-examination system. It does not hold an idea to check individual student’s academic performance for its starting point. Moreover, because designated subjects stated in the Education Personnel Certification Act are included in the curriculum of each university, direct control related to lesson contents for each subject does not take place in principle. External indices like “basic organization for education,” “curriculum, teacher organization,” “facilities and equipment,” “teaching practice for special-needs and dietary,” of each educational institution offering teacher education will be inspected according to approval system inspection standard. In short, the mechanism of curriculum approval itself does not directly manage the quality of teacher education, and therefore holds defects as a “quality assurance” measure.

Maintaining such a basic characteristic, recent curriculum approval administration is gradually moving towards contents like “subjects related to the teaching profession” and “courses

related to subjects.” For instance, orders related to “adequate content to be included” and “names of courses” for each course are gradually becoming more detailed. These erode parts such as educational activities and content that should be left for teachers in charge of the courses, and curriculum organization and personnel allocation that should be left to university autonomy. It creates apprehension that “there is a risk that university autonomy is lost little by little<sup>32</sup>.”

Not only that, the following is pointed out by Junji Yamazaki<sup>33</sup> who was involved in the Curriculum Approval Committee at the same time as Yokosuka. That is, besides a quantitative aspect of external indices, when curriculum approval is actually applied, there are parts increasing that “tend to be influenced by the judgment at administrative office work level of an application and screening process or at individual examiner’s level.” This is because “a minimum standard that guarantees quality in accordance with establishment aims has become vague,” like in the case of “correspondence between licenses and aims of departments” aforementioned.

Consequently, at universities offering teacher education after acquiring curriculum approval, passing the present curriculum approval inspection becomes important, before independently constructing an educational system and planning and managing a curriculum. This leads to a counterintuitive idea or an “illusion<sup>34</sup>” that judges whether “a teaching organization is adequate for teacher education” based on curriculum approval standards. This makes each university to retreat from independently constructing the actual content of teacher education, and performing to improve.

The influence of management enforcement of curriculum approval in Japanese teacher education with has been examined as a subject matter, limitations of achieving quality enhancement of teacher education directly guided by a policy are clear. A system of curriculum approval holds deficiency as a quality assurance measure from the beginning. To continue to strengthen its use in the present form creates a situation where there are more “universities that quickly adapt to the requests of curriculum approval examination by abandoning one’s autonomy” that offer teacher education than “universities that do not pass curriculum approval inspection at times by attempting to place teacher education within independent university management.” That is not preferable from the point of quality enhancement of teacher education on the whole.

The mentality of university people that tend to consider good by passing the curriculum approval screening for the time being is the same that of teacher educators’ who feel relieved after “narrowing down” student teachers for the time being, and finishing practice teaching without major problems.

In that sense, management enforcement of curriculum approval is not only inefficient as a quality enhancement measure related to Japanese teacher education, but also harmful in eroding independence and autonomy of universities involved.<sup>35</sup>

### **3.3 An “area-oriented theory” of teacher education and university independence**

Through such examination, a quality enhancement measure of Japanese teacher education can be understood in the following way; it is something to be constructed expecting there will be further engagement with each university’s independence, while having its base on curriculum approval administration that secures the minimum standard by external indices for the time being.

In terms of the independence of universities involved in teacher education, the result of an “area-oriented theory” of teacher education that Kaoru Yokosuka has been claiming for many

years shows an interesting point. Shortly after arriving at his new post at Miyagi University of Education in 1968, Yokosuka has been actively raising issues about views related to courses for teacher education. Tokiomi Kaigo and others argued that “teacher education” indicates not only a specific area of education, but instead it is a concept that shows one function of it. Yokosuka’s “area-oriented theory” objects to this. He claims that it is preferable to form a particular “area” by arguing that “especially considering teacher education of infant education, primary education, and education for handicapped children, viewing teacher education as “a functional concept” leads to a risk of denying or making light of a technical system of education practice<sup>36</sup>.” Aiming to organize comprehensive teacher education programs regardless of subjects especially in elementary education and special needs education, the question raised can be interpreted that a professor claims an organization responsible for such education and research should be formed as one “area” within a university.

Since taking up his position as a specialist member of Teacher Education Section within the CCE in 2003, Yokosuka continued to be involved in the Curriculum Approval Committee. From around this time, by coincidence, the application of curriculum approval administration has been developing in a similar direction as an “area-oriented theory.” “A department aiming mainly at teacher education” that are in demand related to teacher education curriculum approval for kindergarten and elementary schools is precisely equivalent to this “area.” A movement to strictly question “a corresponding relationship between purposes and characteristics of courses and licenses” at the time of receiving teacher education curriculum approval for junior and senior high schools can also be interpreted as something demanding a “territorial” educational organization stressing teacher education.

Yokosuka started his career as a lecturer and was president from 2000 to 2006 at Miyagi University of Education. Looking throughout his career, what should be noted is a gap between giving remarks as one university faculty or educational researcher about how the organization of teacher education and department courses should be and indicating such as governmental policies holding authoritative power. The former supports each university to independently construct its own teacher education, or promotes such effort from the same viewpoint as a university faculty member. The latter, on the other hand, has a function to authoritatively direct to make an effort for teacher education, and that often destroys the independence of universities. Even if they both shared similar contents, the state of teacher education quality enhancement varies greatly depending on whether it is conducted based on university independence versus ordered by national power.

The whole history of what Yokosuka raised as an “area-oriented theory” of teacher education and the development of policies, based on that theory, shows a serious question about relationships between educational researchers and national power.

## **4. Summary and Issues for the Future**

### **4.1 Teacher education in Japan and structural features related to the reform (summary)**

As we have observed above, the qualities demanded in teachers in Japan (and areas in East Asia) included various humanist elements to a considerable degree. Thus, there is a fundamental problem in the condition where only existing Japanese universities take the task of teacher training education. The complication of recent Japanese teacher education policies means that

policy-makers are still hesitating over the difficult decision on whether to leave the solution to advanced universities or to places outside of universities.

On the other hand, not enough nationwide management measures have been adopted for a teacher education system in Japan. Given that teacher education institutions with “open system” principles have expanded and became widespread, it is imposed on each university to “narrow down” the number of students entering teacher education programs. Due to a bigger scale of the “open system” in Japan compared to other areas, Japanese universities are often placed in an inferior position in cases like securing practice teaching schools because of power relationships. What is being created is a peculiar situation where external appearance such as “dress codes” is taken more seriously than what actually takes place within practice teaching instruction.

Also, the Japanese course approval system has been increasingly used as part of “quality assurance measures,” but it is defective in this regard, because it is based on the regulations of “external indices.” Continuing to operate in this manner it will greatly discourage the independence of Japanese universities involved in teacher education.

#### **4.2 Issues for the future teacher education research, practice and reform**

Given this, what is important when considering teacher education for the future? This will serve as a conclusion.

First, as a premise, understanding and sharing a broad view on the structure of the problem, as it has been attempted in this paper, is necessary. A gap between Japanese university teacher education and a recent demand on issues of teacher quality enhancement is beyond the scope of individual teacher education practice. For teacher education research, analyses related to its background and structure are desirable, not only focusing on teacher education of one institution independently.

Regarding this, the result of a recent nationwide attitude survey<sup>37</sup>, attempted by Hidehiro Suwa, with the subject being potential and first-year teachers of elementary school, is interesting. This survey shows that there is a tendency for young people to demand “practical” programs in a realistic way for the time being. Young people, trained in a training system and curriculum that aimed to train teachers, and the application of curriculum approval being reinforced as mentioned in Section 3, lack an understanding of a university teacher education curriculum on the whole. Based on this, it is a great question whether it is possible to take the practice enforcement of recent Japanese teacher education policies as a success. Hopefully, further research will address this in the future.

These issues of research share similar points with issues of teacher educators in the sense that we should fix our eyes on the essence in cases of individual teacher education practice. As mentioned in Section 2, in Japan where various universities offer teacher education under a large scale “open system” principle, there is a high degree that each university is left to “narrow down” the number of students that register for a teacher education program. This situation is expected to continue as long as the “open system” itself is not changed.

If that is the case, it is desirable for each university to develop teacher education programs that actively reflect a whole university attitude and support competent people. Each university should be able to decide independently what the definition of “a potential teacher” is, more than giving instruction on external aspects like “dress codes” due to the present intention towards practice teaching schools. Naturally, it becomes prerequisite for each university faculty member involved in teacher education to be independent from policy requests from time to time. In this

way, a course for quality enhancement for whole teacher education comes into sight, making use of the “open system” unique to Japan.

Amongst various areas within education, teacher education especially requires a long span to prepare its infrastructure and its stable use. Examining current issues and practices, and considering future teacher education reform in depth, it is advisable to plan whole quality enhancement by researchers and teachers working together regardless of their differing interests. What is called for is a perspective examining teacher education policies that consider whether an analysis between two parts is appropriate: one part being leaving quality enhancement to university faculty members with constructive intentions, and the other being forcefully meeting the minimum standards of external indices.

### Notes

1. Besides Japan, “areas of East Asia” in this paper indicates mainland China (areas under Beijing government), the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Taiwan (areas under the Republic of China government), and South Korea. North Korea (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) is not included in the subject this time. This is because it is difficult to apply research methods like collecting policy documents and conducting participant observation of teacher education. Furthermore, conditions in North Korea differs greatly from that of other areas in terms commercialization and market economy of education service that creates a background for an “East Asian type of teacher images” as mentioned in this paper. Also, the Macau Special Administrative Region is not part of the subject this time due to data limitations.
2. The Central Council for Education “A report on ‘Plans to Total Development of Teachers’ Quality and Abilities throughout the Teacher Career”” August 28, 2012. pp. 5 (II Direction of Reform)
3. Mainichi Shimbun. April 14, 2013.
4. An ‘open system’ aims for a system that allows various higher education institutions to equally provide teacher education programs, other than institutions that have strong aims in teacher education. The author defines it as “a system with few limitations on core entry related to license approval.” Iwata, Y. 2007. “A neo-liberalistic reform of pre-service teacher education and an ‘open system,”” Hirosaki University, Faculty of Education, Center for Teacher Education Research and Development. *Teacher Education Research and Development*. Vol. 3, pp. 3.
5. It is a remark made by then Hinata Planning Officer for Education Reform of MEXT at the “Sub-Committee for the Development of Teachers’ Quality and Ability” of the CCE (7<sup>th</sup> meeting, on November 30, 2010). (a special section meeting for teacher quality enhancement) After several free discussions, the topic for the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting was to “reorganize previous discussions.” Specific issues were addressed from a MEXT officer who was in charge, and specific examinations are now under progress in a direction to create “A Plan for a Discussion Interim Report.” It is based on a wish that “the Minister of MEXT asked the committee members to come to a uniform direction sometime in the academic year.” [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo11/gijiroku/1300736.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo11/gijiroku/1300736.htm)
6. The LDP, “the Headquarters for the Revitalization of Education,” May 23, 2013. pp. 8. (A Suggestion for “a Plan on the Teaching Personnel Development Act”)
7. See Footnote 2, pp.4 (I Present condition and issues)
8. “Teacher *juku*” indicates teacher training programs for university student pre-service teachers, established by boards of education that administer local education. Many programs are taught by people in managerial positions or supervisors of teacher training, and works favorably on students when they look for a teaching job.
9. See footnote 6.
10. See footnote 6.
11. Chen, Y. 1994. *Comparative Study on Teacher Education System between China and Japan*. Gyosei.
12. Iwata, Yasuyuki. 2008. On “East-Asian Style” of Teachers’ Image and Education Reform. In the Curriculum Center for Teachers, Tokyo Gakugei University (eds.), *How East-Asian Teachers*

- Develop?* Tokyo: Tokyo Gakugei University Press. pp. 189–194.
13. Iwata, Y. 2008. Teachers' Image in Modern Japan and Teacher Education Reform. In Yamazaki, T. and Lao, K (eds.), *Sino-Japanese Dialogue on Education Research I*. Shunpusha. pp. 327–369.
  14. Iwata, Y. 2007. Backgrounds and Issues of the Establishment of 'Professional Graduate School of Education. *Annual Bulletin of the Japanese Society for the Study on Teacher Education*. Vol. 16. pp. 33–41.
  15. Hayhoe, R., and Li, J. 2010. The idea of a normal university in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Frontiers of Education in China*. 5(1), pp. 74–103.
  16. The six universities are Beijing Normal University, East China Normal University (Shanghai), Northeast Normal University (Changchun, Jilin), Shaanxi Normal University (Xi'an, Shaanxi), Central China Normal University (Wuhan, Hubei), and Southwest University (an amalgamation of Southwest University of Agriculture and Southwest Normal University, Chongqing)
  17. In South Korea, teacher education for elementary schools is limited to a total of thirteen universities including eleven national universities of education, National University of Education, and Ewha Woman's University.
  18. The data for Japan is from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) secondary education personnel department ("Universities for Teacher Training" include 44 national and 4 private schools). The data for China is from Ministry of Education, Statistics Bureau. A reason for comparing "the number of newly graduates and newly hired" is because there are a considerable number of cases where students in the whole school are hired in cities in China, and teachers shifting to a different school is considered as "employment" in such cases, therefore it lacks in balance with that in Japan.
  19. Participant observation of teaching practice for each country was conducted in Mainland China (Capital Normal University, October 2011, Northeast Normal University, September 2011 and September 2012), Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (The Hong Kong Institute of Education, October to November 2011), Korea (Seoul National University of Education, May 2013), Taiwan (National Taichung University of Education and National Taiwan Normal University, January 2013). For areas outside "East Asia" to be referred to, visiting research was conducted in Thailand (Chulalongkorn University and Khon Kean University, February to March, 2012) and Singapore (National Institute of Education, July 2012). Information up to academic year 2012, see Iwata, Yasuyuki. 2012. "Consideration on 'East-Asian' image of teachers (1): through a comparative study on teaching practice." Curriculum Center for Teachers, Tokyo Gakugei University Annual Research Report. Vol 11.
  20. Attached schools of Japanese teacher education universities work as teaching practice schools. However, since there are not enough attached schools, and they are often different from regular schools (so called "elite schools," and students are "used to teaching practice"), many universities often combine teaching practice for regular schools and form their curriculum. These situations are common to a certain degree in attached schools of education universities and normal universities in areas of East Asia.
  21. Committee for the Future Status of National Universities and Faculties of Education "A report on the future status of national universities and faculties of education" November 22, 2001. [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/shingi/chousa/koutou/005/toushin/011110.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/koutou/005/toushin/011110.htm)
  22. Research Cooperator Meeting on Capacities of Universities and Faculties of Education. "A report on the management of control policies on establishment or enlargement of universities in the realm of education." March 25, 2005. March 25, 2005.
  23. In cases of receiving Level A, an increase in capacity and budget is given as an incentive.
  24. Ministry of Education, the Republic of China. 2010. A report of teacher education evaluation in 2005-2010. In *Yearbook of Teacher Education Statistics* (for academic year 99). pp. 415–420.
  25. The CCC "Report on the Future Status of Teacher Training and Teachers' License." July 11, 2006. In "1. Improvement on the Quality Standard of Teacher Training Courses." [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo0/toushin/attach/1337006.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo0/toushin/attach/1337006.htm)
  26. *Teacher Training Course Approval Standard*. 2 (4), MEXT secondary education personnel department

- ment. *Guide to Applying for Teacher Training Course Approval (2013 academic year, revised version)*. pp. 132.
27. MEXT secondary education personnel department. "On correspondence between licenses and aims of departments," *Guide to Applying for Teacher Training Course Approval (2013 academic year, revised version)*. pp. 170–171. What has been the target of criticism here is an implementation inspection of "a university that has been accredited physical education approval at Department of Business." It was stated that "problems were observed like a philosophy for the training of physical education teachers is not realized, educational curriculum for the training of physical education teachers is not systematically implemented, and teacher training instruction system is not adequately functioning."
  28. Funaki, T. 2005. Establishment of non-examination system for qualifying secondary education teachers including private institutes. In Funaki, T. & Research Group for Non-Examination System for Qualifying Teachers (eds.). *A Historical Study on the Roles of Private Institutes for Secondary School Teacher Training in Modern Japan*. Gakubunsha. pp. 37–45.
  29. Ootani, S. 2001. Continuity between the approval system and the non-examination system for qualifying teachers. T.E.E.S. (Teacher Education and Educational Science) (eds.). *A Historical Research on "Teacher Education at Universities": a Study of Post-war "Faculties of Education."* Gakubunsha. pp. 339–347.
  30. Specifically, each approved institutes were submitting students' attendance, problems in a graduation examination and grades to the Committee of Teacher Qualification, and screening was conducted.
  31. Funaki, T. 2005. Approved institutes and focusing aims for teacher training. In Funaki, T. & Research Group for Non-Examination System for Qualifying Teachers (eds.). *A Historical Study on the Roles of Private Institutes for Secondary School Teacher Training in Modern Japan*. Gakubunsha. pp. 271–178.
  32. Kiuchi, G. 2013. Universities' independency and autonomy under the recent policies of approval system for teacher training courses. *Annual bulletin of the Japanese Society for the Study on Teacher Education*. Vol.22. pp. 38.
  33. Yamazaki, J. 2010. Standards of evaluation for accrediting Professional Graduate Schools of Education and approving teacher training courses. In Interim Report of FY 2009 *Looking for the Possibilities for Approval among Institutes for Teacher Pre-service Education*. pp. 16. The Ministry's Commissioned Project for Leading University Reform FY 2009-2010. A Research Study for Developing Curriculum Model of Teacher Pre-service Education, with Organizations for Evaluation for Universities with Approved Teacher Training Courses (Head: Professor Shimanaka, Michinori). [http://www.u-gakugei.ac.jp/~currict/about/accredit/pdf/report/interim\\_report\\_01.pdf](http://www.u-gakugei.ac.jp/~currict/about/accredit/pdf/report/interim_report_01.pdf)
  34. This is sensed from appealing attitudes that that organizations have the number of subjects and teaching staff over a necessary criteria. To obey beyond minimum standard to state control having power effect basically contradicts with attitudes of independently managing university. However, this sort of "complication" is observed in many university faculty members involved in teacher education.
  35. Kaigo, T at el. 1971 Round-up and Suggestions. "*Teachers Pre-service Education*", the University of Tokyo Press. P. 545
  36. Yokosuka, K. 1976. On Teacher Education Curriculum: Chopping Down the 'Round-up and Suggestion. *A Study for Teachers' Pre-service Education*. Hyoronsha. p. 67.
  37. Suwa, H. 2013. Teacher education curriculum from learners' points of view. In Iwata, Y., Bessou, J., & Suwa, H. (eds.). *What Is Necessary for Primary School Teachers?: Considering Their Competencies from Research Data*. Tokyo: Tokyo Gakugei University Press. pp. 76–94. This research is constructed from two surveys taken in between 2007 and 2008. The first survey was given out prior to and after doing teaching practice to students at 117 national, public, and private universities having been accredited for the 1<sup>st</sup> class license for elementary school teachers. The second one is a survey conducted to those attending first-year teachers' training of 65 prefectural and ordinance designated city boards of education.